

1. What are your experiences with Facebook? What did you see as its benefits and drawbacks?

Initially I thought of Facebook as the trendy MySpace – same thing, new name. But the benefits of having such a widespread social network were obvious – easy communication to people you could not otherwise be capable of contacting, easy way to find people you think you never would have needed to talk to, easy way to organize outings with your friends. Communication ceased to be the same thing after Facebook. Gone are the days of calling each individual friend and checking if they are available to hang out later. Tagging has allowed one person to get information across to fifteen friends in a few seconds where before it would have taken fifteen minutes. The drawbacks seemed to be that Facebook would usher in a new set of social obligations that before were unheard of.

2. In what ways does Facebook encourage us to define ourselves? How does this affect our concept of identity?

Facebook has encouraged us to define ourselves by the things we like, the things we share, and the way we type out our statuses. There is no dislike in Facebook, which means your identity must be expressed purely in the affirmation of something – unless you want to type out “dislike” and then “like” it. Along with the pages and statues that we like, the things we share on Facebook help define ourselves even more, though the things we share are generally reinforced by the status that goes with it. It is inside a status where we find the most superficial derivative of a person. Liking a page is liking a page, and it is hard to distort one’s liking of a particular band into anything more than that – it’s simple and needs no further explanation. A status update is much vaguer; however, as a status update goes under scrutiny and revision before the person hits “Post.” “I went to the park” can turn into “Great time at the park today!!!” very easily, and it is in these moments of the poster’s reflection of his status that we find the forged face of ourselves. These moments reflect our intentions of putting on different masks to get across to our Friends this contrived personality. Identity takes form in the statuses we post.

3. Why are people drawn to the idea of broadcasting their lives?

It’s a natural sense of narcissism that keeps websites like Facebook – and much more so Twitter – alive. As much as we enjoy reading our friends’ posts, we also enjoy someone “liking” ours, or commenting on it. At the center of it lies conceit, our belief that our thoughts are more valuable than other people’s posts. One needs only to go on Twitter for a minute, read some of their friends’ statuses, and see the unbelievable self-centeredness of it all. Useless information upon useless information spews out from people in social networking sites in a search for attention and approval from their peers. It takes belief in the importance of one’s ideas to post them on a social network site for everyone to read, but these sites dispel all fears of feeling like a conceited blockhead. Because on these websites, narcissism pays off. The more ridiculous and personal you get with your statuses often the more attention they will attract, and once you notice it works a positive feedback loop gets established and before too long your last Tweet reads something along the lines of “All girls suck. Trust me.”